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Stepping Up the Pace to Restore America's Everglades

Acceler8 – eight environmental projects to be completed ahead of schedule

With wary alligators, waterfowl, wild flowers and a warm Everglades breeze creating a fitting backdrop, Governor Jeb Bush announced an unprecedented plan to accelerate the restoration of America's Everglades. Joined by White House Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James Connaughton, Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Colleen Castille, South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Chair Nicolás Gutiérrez and a host of local, state and federal partners, Gov. Bush unveiled "Acceler8" Oct. 14 at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

Acceler8 is a *major boost* for Everglades restoration by *stepping up the pace* to fund and complete eight projects by 2011 – more than a decade ahead of schedule. Many of these key projects provide the foundation for future restoration efforts.

"Florida is strengthening its commitment to the Everglades by further accelerating the largest environmental restoration effort in this nation's history," Bush said. "Completing critical restoration projects more than 10 years ahead of schedule will save money and provide immediate environmental, social and economic benefits."

By accelerating the funding, design and construction of these projects, the Everglades will experience positive benefits much sooner... and in a more cost-effective manner. As opposed to the "pay as you go" approach, taxpayer dollars needed

for construction will be significantly leveraged. The South Florida Water Management District will finance project construction with "Certificates of Participation" revenue bonding. Financing and fast-tracking these projects now helps avoid the inevitable increases in construction and labor costs.

Most of the land for these projects has already been acquired, with much of it purchased in partnership with the federal government. Acceler8 strengthens the state and federal partnership to restore the Everglades.

Building these projects on an accelerated pace is a major economic undertaking that is expected to generate a demand for goods and services. Special efforts are being made to ensure that a variety of vendors and contractors will be utilized, and partnerships are under way with local workforce development organizations to help prepare area workers with needed job skills.

This year's busy hurricane season swelled central and southern Florida lakes and water storage areas to capacity, underscoring the need to move forward as expeditiously as possible with the monumental effort to restore and revitalize the Everglades ecosystem. In addition to more immediate environmental improvements, the Acceler8 projects will also provide greater flood control and water supply flexibility, along with increased public access and recreational opportunities.

Inside: A closer look at Acceler8 projects

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